Questions and Answers about Meelad-un-Nabi - Celebrating the Birthday of the Holy Prophet Muhammad

(Peace be upon him)

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Q. What is "Meelad-un-Nabi"?
A. Meelad-un-Nabi is the name given to the celebration of the birthday of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). In the Muslim world it is also known as Mawlid-un-Nabi, Mawlid-ur-Rasool or sometimes as Mawlood.

Q. When do Muslims celebrate Meelad-un-Nabi?
A. Muslims worldwide celebrate Meelad-un-Nabi throughout the whole year but especially during the month of Rabi'-ul-Awwal (3rd Islamic month), the month of our Noble Prophet's birth.

Q. On what date of Rabi'-ul-Awwal was our Dear Prophet (peace be upon him) **born?**
A. His blessed birth occurred on the 12th of Rabi'-ul-Awwal.

Q. How do Muslims celebrate his (peace be upon him) **blessed birth?**
A. Muslims gather in mosques and recite the Qur'an, listen to the miraculous events that surrounded his birth, hear stories about his perfect life and they organise processions to announce the bounties of Allah (Qur'an 93:11).

Imam Qastalani says in his masterpiece 'Mawahib-ul-Ladunya' that there is a time on Friday if in which a du'a is made, it is certainly accepted. This is because Allah blew the spirit into Prophet Adam at this time. If supplications are guaranteed to be accepted at the time when Adam was born, then by analogy, there is even greater acceptance when they are made at the time of Prophet Muhammad's birth.

Q. What is "Bid'ah" and is Meelad-un-Nabi a Bid'ah?
A. Linguistically, Bid'ah means innovation. In Islamic terminology, Bid'ah refers to that new act which has no previous example. Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) was asked by the sahaba about his fasting on Monday. The Prophet replied that his fasting on every Monday was because his birth occurred on this day (Muslim). So commemorating Meelad-un-Nabi is proven from the sunnah of our dear Prophet (peace be upon him) and can in no way be called a Bid'ah. Meelad-un-Nabi celebrations involve various acts of worship: Remembrance of Allah and His Prophet, listening to talks about Islam, hearing the praises of the Prophet, publicising the greatest favour of Allah and gathering in mosques. To label these acts as Bid'ah is nothing less than ignorance.

The Holy Prophet nor the sahaba held special gatherings in Rabi'-ul-Awwal like we do and neither did they hold processions to celebrate the Meelad but this does not automatically make our gathering a Bid'ah. A simple criteria has been given to us by the Dear Prophet himself to judge as to which new acts are Bid'ah. The Noble Prophet declared, "When a nation invents a Bid'ah, a similar Sunnah is extinguished" (Mishkat). Those acts such a Meelad that do not extinguish a Sunnah cannot be termed Bid'ah according to the Prophet himself and those people who insist on terming Meelad-un-Nabi as Bid'ah should ponder over the Prophetic criteria. If they can show which Sunnah of the Prophet the Meelad extinguishes then Muslims will cease to celebrate it but if they cannot, and surely they cannot, then they must stop accusing innocent Muslims as being those who commit Bid'ah. Those acts which contravene the Qur'an and Sunnah are Bid'ah and those, like Meelad, that bring others towards the Qur'an and Sunnah are definitely allowed in Islam.

All things are allowed in Islam until they are forbidden. Allah says, **"Say, bring forward your witnesses who can testify that Allah has forbidden this"** (6:150). This verse is one of many which shows that the Shari'ah allows any act providing: (1) the Qur'an and Sunnah have not forbidden it and (2) It doesn't contravene the Qur'an and Sunnah. Meelad-un-Nabi unequivocally satisfies these criteria. The sahabi, Abdullah ibn Abbas said, "Whatever the Qur'an termed as halal is halal, whatever it deemed haram is haram and about which it remained silent, it is all forgiven (Abu Dawud). The Qur'an has nowhere forbidden Meelad, therefore, no authority in this world can deem it to be illegal within the Shari'ah.

Q. Why do Muslims celebrate this event?

A. Muslims celebrate Meelad-un-Nabi as it is the order of the Almighty Allah (May He be glorified). He says in the Qur'an, **"And abundantly proclaim the favours of your Lord"** (93:11) and also, **"Say: "In the bounty of Allah and in His Mercy let them rejoice"** (10:58). These orders of Allah (May He be glorified) make it very clear that Muslims ***must*** celebrate the favours and mercies that Allah has granted.

Q. Is the Prophet a 'mercy' and a 'favour' of Allah?

A. Yes! As the Qur'an itself bears witness, our glorious Prophet (peace be upon him) is the **Greatest** favour and mercy of Allah (May He be glorified). The believers have been granted innumerable bounties by Allah (May He be glorified), but no where has the Lord Almighty mentioned that these bounties are a 'great favour' of His upon them. Yet, when the Prophet (peace be upon him) is mentioned as a bounty, the Almighty Allah (May He be glorified) clearly announces, **"Undoubtedly, Allah did confer a great favour on the Muslims that from among themselves He sent a Messenger"** (3:164). From this it can be correctly deduced that our Master, intercessor and the first of Allah's creation, **Prophet Muhammad, is the Greatest of Allah's favours upon His creation.**

As far as the Prophet (peace be upon him) being a 'mercy' goes, Allah again shows what a great status His Dear Prophet (peace be upon him) holds. The Almighty says, **"And We sent you not (Oh Muhammad) but as a mercy for all worlds"** (21:107).

Thus, it is concluded from clear verses of the Holy Qur'an that our Dear Prophet (peace be upon him) is a 'mercy' and a 'favour'. Not just this, we discover from the Book of Allah that He is the **Greatest** of Allah's mercies and favours upon creation.

Hence, to oppose the celebration of Meelad-un-Nabi is indeed going against the Word of Allah (May He be glorified), and to go against the Word of Allah is a major sin in Islam.

Allah says, **"And abundantly proclaim the favours of your Lord"** (93:11). Imam Bukhari states that the Holy Prophet is the greatest bounty of Allah; hence he should become the object of the most publicity.

Q. Did the Prophet Muhammad or the sahaba speak about the holy birth?

A. Yes! The Holy Prophet spoke about his blessed birth from the pulpit (Tirmizi). On his instructions some of the noble companions also described and publicised the Holy prophet's most excellent qualities. The sahaba used to gather in the Prophet's mosque and talk about the miraculous happenings that occurred at the birth of the Holy Messenger (Mishkat). The Dear Prophet (peace be upon him) guaranteed paradise to those who talked about his birth in the company of Abdullah ibn Abbas (At-Tanweer of Imam Abul Khattab). So we find that the Prophet and the sahaba most certainly held Meelad gatherings.

Q. What have the Ulama (scholars) **said about celebrating Meelad-un-Nabi?**

A. The overwhelming majority of scholars have supported its celebration. Many scholars have praised the Meelad and some even wrote books about it. Some of these scholars are: Imam Suyuti, Imam Asqalani, Imam Qastalani, Allama Sakhawi, Mulla Ali Qari, Hafiz ibn Kathir, Hafiz 'Iraqi, Shah Waliullah, ibn Jawzi, Imam Abu Shama, Imam Abul Khattab, Allama Nabhani, Imam Zanji, Imam Shaibani, Shah Abdul Haq Dehlwi, Imam Wa'ili and Imam Farooqi. Even those scholars whose followers (Wahabis and Deobandis) oppose the Meelad have written in favour of it such as ibn Taymiyyah, Nawab Siddiq Hasan Bhopali, Haji Imdadullah Makki, Ashraf Ali Thanwi and Qasim Nonotwi. Hence, the very celebration that modern day Wahabis and Deobandis oppose has been approved of by their own scholars. The Wahabi scholar Nawab Siddiq Hasan Bhopali has gone as far as stating: "He who does not feel joy at the Meelad and does not show happiness at this gaining of mercy, then he is not a Muslim". (Ash-Shamamatul Anbariya).

Q. Have the Qur'an or ahadith given significance to the days on which other Prophet's were born?

A. Yes! Prophet Musa (peace be upon him) told his nation, **"O my people! Call in remembrance the favour of Allah unto you when He produced prophets among you"** (5:20). The Qur'an talks about Prophet Isa (peace be upon him) thus, **"So Peace is on me the day I was born, the day that I die and the Day that I shall be raised up to life (again)"!** (19:33). Regarding Prophet Yahya the Qur'an says, **"So Peace on him the day he was born, the day that he dies and the day that he will be raised up to life (again)!"** (19:15).

The Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said, The best day on which the sun rises is Friday. Adam was created on Friday and on that day he entered paradise and on that day he was expelled from paradise. And the Hour will come to pass on Friday (Muslim).

So we clearly conclude from this that days on which Prophets are born hold a special virtue and merit. If the days on which Israelite Prophets were born hold such a massive significance, then the day on which the leader of the Prophets, our dear Master Muhammad (peace be upon him) was born most certainly holds an even greater significance.

The Qur'an and ahadith are clear in their verdict that days on which Prophets are born are especially blessed and should be remembered often.